

What to do in winter?

Simple tips for managing your garden

Save your soil

If you didn't plant a cover crop, you can still help save your soil by adding a layer of mulch. Mulching is another way to protect your soil and all its beneficial inhabitants. Ideally, you should mulch before it freezes, but we still have several months of cold weather ahead of us. Spread one to three inches of deciduous leaves, compost or straw. This cozy blanket not only protects, but also adds a source of food for the bacteria, fungi, protozoa, insects and other invertebrates that are so important to making healthy garden soil.



Planning

Winter is a great time to start planning your vegetable garden. Put on your favorite pair of slippers, grab a mug of hot cocoa and start preparing.

1. Start by listing all the vegetables that you and your family like to eat, and then add one vegetable that's new and different to experiment with.
2. Study seed catalogs to get an idea of how each vegetable will grow. A good catalog will tell you how far apart each plant should be planted, its height, and germination and harvest times.
3. Draw a sample garden plot on paper. Use graph or grid paper or just draw your own grid on a scratch piece of paper. Let each square represent one foot of garden space.
4. Using your sample garden plot and the notes about each plant from the seed catalog, determine how many of each plant you will grow and where they will be planted.
5. Mark on your grid where each plant will be placed. Don't forget to mark pathways, water spigots and storage spaces. Have fun - use colored pencils or crayons for different plants.

